

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Entry of this amendment and Favorable reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 4, 5, and 2 – 26 have been amended, Claim 11 has been canceled, and new Claims 30 – 40 have been added.

In the Advisory Action, the Examiner maintained the 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) rejection of Claims 1 and 4 – 29 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,399,016 to Burrow (“the Burrow patent”). Although the Applicants respectfully disagree, Claim 1 has been amended to further distinguish over the Burrow patent. These amendments are in no way an indication of the Applicants’ acquiescence to the Examiner’s rejection or reasons therefore, but are merely presented to advance the application toward allowance. Accordingly, Applicants reserve the right to file a continuation application to pursue the subject matter of any and/or all of the previously pending claims.

Claim 1 has been amended to recite, *inter alia*:

“a solids feed apparatus to supply metalliferous feed material and carbonaceous material into the vessel, the solids feed apparatus including a plurality of solids injection lances that are arranged to extend downwardly and inwardly through openings in the side wall and are removable from the vessel;

...

(iv) at least a portion of the solids feed apparatus extending under the end tap platform from a location remote from the vessel.”

The Burrow patent fails to disclose the “solids feeds apparatus extending under the end tap platform from a location remote from the vessel,” as recited in sub-paragraph (iv) of amended claim 1. The only disclosure in the Burrow patent concerning the feeding of solid materials into the vessel is at column 4, lines 5-18. However, this passage only discloses that solids injection lances extend downwardly and inwardly through the side walls of the vessel and that the position of the lances is selected so

that their outlet ends are above the surface of the metal layer of a bath contained within the vessel.

Therefore, there is no suggestion or teaching in the Burrow patent for arranging “at least a portion of the solids feed apparatus extending under the end tap platform from a location remote from the vessel”. The arrangement of the solids feed apparatus to extend under the end tap platform avoids interference with other operations located at various heights of the vessel. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the Section 103 rejection and issue a notice of allowance for Claim 1 and Claims 4 – 29 that depend from Claim 1.

Regarding new Claim 30, which recites, *inter alia*:

“(ii) the metal tapping apparatus and the slag tapping apparatus being located so as to be accessible by plant operators on a cast house platform that is separate and above the end tap platform and the cast house platform being selectively formed so as to have a footprint that extends above the work areas at least in the immediate vicinity of the end metal tapping apparatus and the end slag tapping apparatus.”

There is no disclosure in the Burrow patent concerning the selective formation of the cast house platform with a footprint that extends above the work areas at least in the immediate vicinity of the end metal tapping apparatus and the end slag tapping apparatus. In addition there is no disclosure in the Burrow patent of a cast house platform being above an end tap platform. Therefore, Claim 30 and Claims 31 – 33 that depend therefrom are allowable and the Examiner is respectfully requested to issue a notice of allowance to that effect.

Regarding new Claim 34, which recites, *inter alia*:

“(iii) the cast house platform is selectively formed with a footprint that does not extend into a region of space above a portion of the end tap platform to thereby provide overhead crane access to said portion of the end tap platform whereby equipment and materials can be lifted from said portion of the end tap platform.”

There is no disclosure in the Burrow patent concerning the selective formation that the cast house platform is formed with a footprint that enables overhead crane

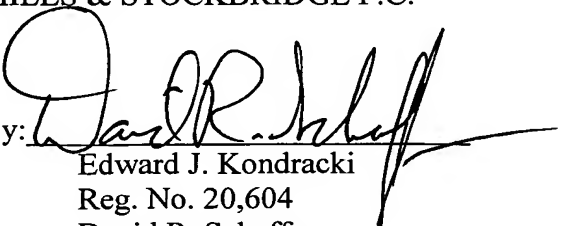
access to the end tap platform. In fact, the only disclosure in the Burrow patent concerning overhead crane access is in respect of "the cast house floor and its equipment" (col. 5, lines 30-32), but it fails to disclose or suggest forming the cast house platform with a footprint that enables overhead crane access to the end tap platform.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe that all claims as currently presented are allowable over the cited prior art, and are, in all other respects, in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of all rejections, and passage of the application to issue at an early date, are earnestly solicited. The Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned should any further issues remain to be resolved in the application.

It is respectfully requested that the time now set for response be extended, retroactively, by three months. A check in payment of the extension of time fee is attached hereto. If any further extension of time is required to avoid the abandonment of this application, such extension is hereby requested. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 that may be required by this paper to Deposit Account No. 50-1165.

Respectfully submitted,

MILES & STOCKBRIDGE P.C.

By: 
Edward J. Kondracki
Reg. No. 20,604
David R. Schaffer
Reg. No. 43,089

1751 Pinnacle Drive, Suite 500
McLean, Virginia 22102-3833
Telephone: (703) 610-8649
#9301800v1